TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION
FIRST QUARTER COMMISSION MEETING (FY 2026)
Thurday, November 13, 2025, 09:00 a.m.
George HW Bush Bldg, 1801 Congress Ave, 4.300 Conference room, Austin, TX 78701

MINUTES

I. OPENING

A. Chairwoman Laura Koerner calls the meeting to order at 09:00 a.m.
B. Roll call:

Secretary Chuck Wright informs Chairwoman Koerner that a quorum is present.

Chairwoman Laura Koerner, Vice-Chair Kevin Barber (online), Secretary Chuck Wright, Commissioner Mike Hernandez, Commissioner Mary Dale
Also present: Executive Director Thomas P. Palladino.

C. Commissioner Kevin Barber led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag, and Commissioner Chuck Wright led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas Flag.
D. Chip Osborne led the Commission in prayer.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

A. Two individuals signed up for public comment, but they are on agenda items. The commission will hear these two individuals during their specific agenda item.
   i. Uryan Nelson – Central Texas Council of Governments "VetRide) – grant amendment request to extend grant performance period for an additional 8 months.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

Action regarding approval of the Consent Agenda*. Chair Koerner asked if any commissioner wanted to remove anything from the consent agenda and place it on the FY 26, 1Q Commission Meeting agenda.*

No additional items were removed from the consent agenda.

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Chuck Wright and seconded by Commissioner Mary Dale to approve the Consent Agenda.
VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

A. ***Agenda Item IV.A.*** is the presentation of the University of Texas at Arlington 2025 Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA). *David Salgado, Director, Veterans Education*

presented.

B. ***Agenda Item IV.B.*** is the presentation of joint activities between the Veterans Land Board and the Texas Veterans Commission. Jimmy Smaragdis and Tony Dale, Executive Secretary of the Veterans Land Board, presented.

V. REPORTS

A. ***FY2025 Annual Internal Audit Report***. Kim Lopez Gonzales of Garza, Gonzalez & Associates, provided a summary of the detailed report.

B. ***Report on Agency Departments and Programs.***

i. **Veteran Benefits Division (VBD)**. Charles Catoe, Division Director, provided VBD updates.

- **Claims Department.**
  - 9 new FTE's (4 after-hours Claims Benefit Advisors, 1 Odessa, 2 NW San Antonio VA clinic, 1 Houston RO, 1 Hutto City Hall
  - Leadership team building and policy planning meeting
- **Impact of Federal shut down.**
  - Houston Regional office was closed, and staff were working from home. The office is now open.
  - Waco Regional office was closed, but staff are working back in the office.
  - PIV card process completely stopped; backlog will need to be cleared.
    - Current wait time for PIV cards after a new staff member receives the mandatory training averages from 2 weeks to 3 months
- **Health Care Advocacy Department.**
  - Department training to assist with Healthcare advocates' soft skills
  - Increase foot traffic in TVC offices while the government was shut down
- **Veterans Mental Health Department.**
  - New Director, Brenda Keller
  - Legislature gave eight additional FTE's, making 18 in the department
  - Mind Matters Summit – 124 individuals attended from across Texas
- **Veterans Education Department.**
  - 18 VEERA awards presented, the remainder will be presented at TACVPO
  - Hazlewood Database – expected to go live late November, early December
    - Training Plan – send contractor-prepared user guides to all schools
    - Planning two virtual trainings a week after the go-live date
  - Impact from government shutdown
    - GI Bill hotline completely shut down, resulting in increased calls to our education hotline

ii. **Veteran Services Division (VSD)**. Chip Osborne, Division Director, provided VSD updates.

- **Veteran Employment Services.**
  - Hiring Red, White and You – completed 28 of 30 events as of the

Commission meeting.

- **Women Veteran Program.**
  - Women Veteran event - Lewisville

A. (FY) 2025 Performance Measures

a. Transfer of Performance Measures to Deputy Executive Director
b. FY26 New Performance Measures

C. ***Deputy Executive Director Report***. Shawn Deabay, Deputy Executive Director, provided DED updates.

- **Communications and Outreach**
  - New Director, Margaret Hession
  - Website Engagements statistics
  - UT Veterans' Game

i. FY25, 4Q Operating Statement – Michelle Nall, Chief Financial Officer, presented.
ii. FY25 Human Resources End of the Year Report – Tina Whitis, Director, Human Resources & Event Management, presented.

D. ***Executive Director Report***.

i. **Updates.**
- Veterans Day Events
- Legislative Session – gave additional resources, we are working on filling those FTE's, more Claims offices in rural areas; working with state, county, city and nonprofit organizations to assist veterans.
- Telework updates – all our offices are open every day; all telework agreements are approved individually by the Executive Director.

VI. CONSIDERATIONS

A. ***Action Regarding FY26 Internal Audit Plan,*** Kimberly Gonzales, Garza, Gonzalez & Associates, presented this item for approval. Recommended for auditing: Records Management and Complaint Intake and Processing.

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Kevin Barber and seconded by Commissioner Mary Dale to approve FY26 Internal Audit Plan.
VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

B. ***Action Regarding Fund for Veterans' Assistance Advisory Committee (FVA A/C) Membership.*** Shawn Deabay, Deputy Executive Director, presented this item for approval.

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Mary Dale and seconded by Commissioner Mike Hernandez to accept and approve the FVA A/C new members.
VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

C. ***Action Regarding the Grant Amendment Request from Central Texas Council of Governments (CTCOG), Vet Ride.*** Request to extend the grant performance period for an additional eight months. Erv Leos, Fund for Veterans' Assistant Director, will provide an update.

Public Comment – Uryan Nelson, CTCOG Vet Ride

MOTION: Table this item indefinitely.

Made by Chairwoman Laura Koerner and seconded by Commissioner Kevin Barber to accept and approve the FVA A/C new members.
VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

D. A***ction Regarding the Hidalgo County Community Service Agency GY 25-26.*** Request to amend grant for an additional $150,000. Erv Leos, Director, Fund for Veterans' Assistance, presented this item for approval**.**

Public Comment – Jaime Longoria, Executive Director of the Hidalgo Community Service Agency

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Chuck Wright and seconded by Commissioner Mary Dale to amend the GY25-26 grant for an additional $150,000.
VOTE: 5-0 Motion Passed.

E. ***Action Regarding the Addition of the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) to the 2025 Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Awards (VEERA) recipient list.*** David Salgado, Director, Veterans Education Department, presented this item for approval**.**

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Kevin Barber and seconded by Commissioner Chuck Wright to approve the addition of UTEP to the VEERA recipient list.
VOTE: 5-0 Motion Passed.

F. ***Action Regarding the proposed posting of statutory four-year rule review of Title 40, TAC Part 15, Chapter 457, Protests of Agency Purchases, and 460 Fund for Veterans Assistance Program.*** Kirstin Erickson, General Counsel, presented this item for approval.

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Mary Dale and seconded by Commissioner Kevin Barber to approve the proposed posting of the statutory four-year rule review of Title 40, Part 15, Chapter 457, Protests of Agency Purchases, and 460 Fund for Veterans Assistance Program**.**
VOTE: 5-0 Motion Passed.

G. ***Action Regarding the proposed repeal of Title 40, TAC Part 15, Chapter 457.1, Protests.*** Kirstin Erickson, General Counsel, presented this item for approval**.**

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Mary Dale and seconded by Commissioner Chuck Wright to approve the proposed repeal of Title 40, Part 15, Chapter 457.1, Protests.
VOTE: 5-0 Motion Passed.

H. ***Action Regarding the proposed repeal of Title 40, TAC Part 15, Chapter 457, Protests of Agency Purchases.*** Kirstin Erickson, General Counsel, presented this item for approval**.**

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Chuck Wright and seconded by Commissioner Mary Dale to approve *the* proposed repeal of Title 40, Part 15, Chapter 457, Protests of Agency. Kirstin Erickson, General Counsel, presented this item for approval**.**

VOTE: 5-0 Motion Passed.

I. ***Action Regarding the proposed repeal of Title 40, TAC Part 15, Chapter 460, Fund for Veterans' Assistance Program.*** Kirstin Erickson, General Counsel, presented this item for approval.

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Kevin Barber and seconded by Commissioner Mary Dale to approve the proposed repeal of Title 40, Part 15, Chapter 460, Fund for Veterans' Assistance Program.
Noted Change: Keep the word "Pilot" in the Pilot Program rules, which expires September 1, 2027
VOTE: 5-0 Motion Passed.

J. ***Action Regarding the proposed new rule of Title 40, Part 15, Chapter 460, Fund for Veterans' Assistance Program.*** Kirstin Erickson, General Counsel, presented this item for approval.

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Chuck Wright and seconded by Commissioner Mike Hernandez to approve the proposed new rule of Title 40, Part 15, Chapter 460, Fund for Veterans' Assistance Program.
Noted Change: Keep the word "Pilot" in the Pilot Program rules, which expires September 1, 2027
VOTE: 5-0 Motion Passed.

VII. ***Executive Session.***

None.

VIII. ***Discussion about setting the date, time, and location of the next Commission Meeting.***

The Commission agreed that the 2nd Quarterly Commission Meeting of FY 2026 would be held on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 9:00 a.m., at HQ Austin, TX, George H.W. Bush Building, 4.300 conference room.

IX. ***Adjournment.***

Chairwoman Koerner asked each Commissioner for any closing remarks. The Commissioners extended their gratitude to the staff and the Advisory Committee members. The Executive Director thanked the Texas Veterans Commission staff for their support and hard work in serving Texas Veterans.

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Mary Dale, seconded by Commissioner Chuck Wright, motion to adjourn.
VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

Chairwoman Koerner adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.